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Reagan to Veto Bill Creating 'Drug Czar'

Associated Press

President Reagan will veto legislation that would have created a "drug czar," with extensive powers over federal agencies, to conduct the government's war against drugs, administration officials said yesterday. The president's decision is expected to be announced today.

Sen. Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.), chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and Sen. Joseph R. Biden Jr. (D-Del.), a sponsor of the bill, had visited the White House to lobby for Reagan's approval.

But officials said Reagan's objections were based on the cost, a belief that some parts of the measure are unconstitutional and a concern that it would create another layer in the drug enforcement bureaucracy.

The measure was supported by the General Accounting Office, the congressional, watchdog agency, which believes that central management of drug enforcement is necessary. But it was opposed by the Justice Department.